

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 83

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Dr. Benjamin Franklin Byrd, Jr., of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Benjamin Franklin Byrd, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Byrd was an exemplary surgeon, educator, and public servant who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a native Nashvillian, Dr. Benjamin Byrd, Jr. was born on May 18, 1918, the son of Benjamin Franklin and Ida Brister Byrd; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Byrd attended the Duncan College Preparatory School in Nashville, received an A.B. degree from Vanderbilt University in 1937, and earned his M.D. degree from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in 1941; and

WHEREAS, Benjamin Byrd, Jr. was an Eagle Scout whose ROTC and medical training left him uniquely prepared for life as a military surgeon. As a young medical resident, Dr. Byrd immediately enlisted in the U.S. Army after the attack on Pearl Harbor and was assigned to the 29th Infantry Division, 104th Medical Battalion, a Unit of the 116th Regimental Combat Team (RCT), which traces its lineage back to Stonewall Jackson's command; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Byrd's unit stormed Omaha Beach on D-Day, and after heading the medical evacuation of the wounded, the doctor traveled with them, saving lives as the unit took Saint Lo a month later and fought its way across France and Germany; Dr. Byrd also served as Commanding Officer of the 314th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH); and

WHEREAS, leading up to the capture of Saint Lo, the Third Battalion of the 116th RCT had taken the road from the east into the town, and Major Tom Howie, who had just taken command of the Third Battalion, told his officers, "I'll see you in Saint Lo." Shortly thereafter, the Major was killed during a mortar attack. The Commanding General ordered Major Howie's body

to be carried into the city, so that he would be the first to enter Saint Lo. Dr. Byrd's ambulance transported the Major's body to the ruins of the Saint Croix Cathedral in St. Lo, where Dr. Byrd, with the help of two MPs and his jeep driver, covered the body with a flag and placed flowers around the bier on the ruins. A photograph of that event was reproduced worldwide. The town of Saint Lo erected a monument to Major Howie, and in 1956, *Collier's* magazine printed a story, *The Major of St. Lo*, and a dramatization of the event was televised on *Cavalcade of America*; and

WHEREAS, during his years of military service Dr. Byrd received many honors; he held the European Theatre ribbon from the Normandy/Omaha Beach invasion, was awarded the Bronze Star with two oak leaf clusters after St. Lo, and earned both the Purple Heart and the Silver Star at the Roer River crossing in Germany; he left the army with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel; and

WHEREAS, when he came home from World War II, Dr. Byrd centered his interest in patients with breast cancer and went on to spend the next six decades of his life fighting this deadly and disfiguring disease. Along the way, he changed how doctors dealt with breast cancer and helped turn Nashville's Vanderbilt University Medical School into one of the preeminent cancer research centers in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Byrd's conviction that early diagnosis of breast cancer would be facilitated by mammography would improve survival was dramatically confirmed by the joint ACS-NIH Breast Cancer Detection Demonstration Project, which he headed; and

WHEREAS, in a career marked by distinctive service, Dr. Benjamin Byrd, Jr., served as Professor of Clinical Surgery at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and Professor of Clinical Surgery at Meharry Medical College, Chairman of the Board of Overseers of the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, and Chief of Surgery at St. Thomas Hospital from 1964 to 1970; additionally, he served as President of the Medical Staff at the Junior League Home for Crippled Children and was President of the Nashville Academy of Medicine; and

WHEREAS, a dedicated physician committed to the health and welfare of his patients, Dr. Byrd served as President of the Tennessee Division of the American Cancer Society in 1963, and served on its national board of directors from 1965 onward; from 1975 to 1976, Dr.

Byrd served as President of the American Cancer Society (National), and the American Cancer Society awarded him its first Ted Marrs Award; moreover, Dr. Byrd served as Chairman of the Cancer Study Group in the USSR in 1976, in The People's Republic of China in 1977, and the National Conference on Breast Cancer in 1979; and

WHEREAS, in reflecting upon Dr. Byrd's important work as President of the American Cancer Society, Alan C. Davis, a colleague of Dr. Byrd's at the Society, remarked, "Dr. Byrd was also a skilled diplomat. I had the honor to serve as staff to the first delegation of American Cancer Society volunteers to the USSR in 1976. The purpose of this trip was to demonstrate to that Communist country the strength and impact of a voluntary health agency in combating cancer. As President of the American Cancer Society, he effectively and impressively represented the very best in American values of volunteerism in fighting disease. His comment that 'cancer knows no boundaries' had a decided impact on our hosts. This historic trip resulted in the establishment of productive relations between American and Soviet cancer scientists that brought benefits to patients on both sides of the Iron Curtain."; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin Byrd, Jr., also served with great probity as a member of the Board of Governors of the American College of Surgeons from 1973 to 1979, Fellow of the Southern Surgical Association, Fellow of the American Surgical Association, Chairman of the Surgery Section of the Southern Medical Association, President of the Vanderbilt University Medical School Alumni Association, and President of the Southern Surgical Congress; and

WHEREAS, this venerable physician received the Distinguished Service Award in 1977, was named a Fellow of the Société Internationale de Chirurgie in 1974, received the Outstanding Physician of the Year Award from the Tennessee Medical Association in 1986, and the Distinguished Physician Award from the Tennessee Hospital Association in 1992; and

WHEREAS, while committed to his work with the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, Dr. Benjamin Byrd, Jr., was also a devoted leader in his church; he served the First Presbyterian Church as Sunday School Director, as Deacon, and as Elder; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Byrd also served with great acumen as Chairman of the Board of Cheekwood, from 1971 to 1973, President of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, from 1984 to 1985, Chairman of the Hermitage Board of Trustees, from 1982 to 1990, President of

the Exchange Club, in 1966, and President of Leadership Nashville in 1983; he was a Trustee of Senior Citizens, the Cumberland Museum, the University School of Nashville, and Historic Nashville, and Dr. Byrd also served as a director and member of the Trust Board of Commerce Union Bank, as a director of the NLT Corporation, and with many other estimable organizations too numerous to list; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin Byrd, Jr., was named Outstanding Nashvillian in 1986 for his role as President of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce; under his leadership, the city became an American Airlines hub and gained the Saturn automotive plant, among many other significant developments; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, Dr. Byrd received the Human Relations Award from the National Council of Christians and Jews; he will be remembered as a man of service to his family, his profession, his community, and his country; given many talents, he returned them many times over; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Byrd, affectionately known by his family as “Doc,” is survived by his wife, Allison Caldwell, their six children: Benjamin Franklin Byrd III, M.D. (Mary), Barney Duncan Byrd (Elena), Damon Winston Byrd, Andrew Wayne Byrd (Marianne), Evelyn Byrd Blackmon (Stephen E.), John W. Thomas Byrd, M.D. (Donna) and his grandchildren: Caroline Lindsay Byrd, Benjamin Franklin Byrd IV, James E. Caldwell Byrd, Madeleine Elizabeth Byrd, Ainsley Rachel Willow Byrd, Meredith Marie Byrd, Marianne Byrd Sabis (Christopher), Valere Byrd Fulwider (Benjamin), Andrew Wayne Byrd, Jr., Allison Sheppard Byrd, and Ellen Beverly Byrd; and

WHEREAS, Director of the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, Raymond N. DuBois, M.D., Ph.D., who holds the B.F. Byrd Jr. Professor of Oncology chair, said that “Dr. Byrd is really one of the pillars of the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center. He worked extremely hard to make sure that we could have one of the best cancer centers in the country. I have never met anyone who was so dedicated to the cause and so willing to help out in every way possible. He will be missed greatly.”; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin F. Byrd, Jr., leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional surgeon, educator, public servant, and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Dr. Benjamin Franklin Byrd, Jr., reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and great ability as a physician, his devotion to his faith, his country, and his family, and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Dr. Byrd.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.